



August 8, 2010
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NPS Announces Acquisition of Historic Pawling Farm

A land transfer that protects 78 acres of historic land in Valley Forge National Historical Park has been completed. The land and its historic resources will be completely preserved; its natural habitat will be restored; and it will be opened to all as high quality open space.

Located on the north side of the park, this beautiful land was part of the Henry Pawling farm, and was the site of the commissary operation that had the overwhelming responsibility to feed and clothe the soldiers of the Continental Army during the Valley Forge encampment in winter 1777-78. One of the major achievements of the encampment was the reorganization and professionalization of this operation, making it possible for the army to stay together and persevere for five more years to win the Revolution.

On the Perkiomen Peninsula, of which the Pawling Farm is a part, extensive open space already has been preserved by the NPS, Montgomery County, and Lower Providence Township, and this site is a keystone parcel that now links together a number of existing contiguous sites and enhances their aesthetic, recreational and natural values. The farm lies between the popular Schuylkill River Trail, the major regional trail linking Philadelphia and points north, and the River Trail, a quiet path bordering the river. In keeping with the planned, no-impact approach to use of the site, a walking trail will be mown between the two bordering trails for access to the interior.

Restoration of the land, which has been farmed for three centuries, will begin immediately. Removal of exotic, invasive plant species will begin with a volunteer project on National Public Lands Day, September 25. The first planting of native trees, which will provide shade and wind protection for a section of the Schuylkill River Trail, is scheduled for October 16. Beginning next spring, through a partnership with Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Wildlife Office, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the US Department of Defense, the former farm fields will be transformed into the rarest of habitats: high quality meadows. The meadows will be planted with species that provide habitat for the endangered Regal Fritillary Butterfly and other increasingly threatened butterflies and birds. The enhanced habitat, the presence of streams and wetlands on and around the site, and its nearness to the Schuylkill River mean that this will be one of the best places in the region to see wildlife.

Preservation of the land also means that the historic landscape and important encampment-era and pre-historic archeological sites will be protected. Mike Caldwell, Superintendent of Valley Forge NHP, called the land “a jewel,” noting that its permanent preservation is a remarkable accomplishment that honors and commemorates the endurance of the Continental Army and provides outstanding benefits to all Americans now and for generations to come.

About Valley Forge National Historical Park

Valley Forge National Historical Park is a national icon of the American Revolution that serves as a place where visitors enjoy, understand, care for, and preserve America’s history and natural heritage. The Park offers an engaging, complete educational and recreational experience, providing an important piece of the American story in a beautiful, historical, preserved landscape.